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The Integrated Curriculum: An Alternative Model of Liberal Education

Charles J. Morris, Provost

One of the things that has always concerned me about our general education (GE) program at Denison is that it has operated almost entirely independently of the academic major and therefore, as a whole, has been devoid of any strong faculty ownership. An "orphan," as some critics have described it. The problem is further compounded by the fact that few faculty have any knowledge of--or even interest in--what is taught in general education courses except perhaps the one(s) taught in their own department. (In fact, I continue to be amazed about how little many faculty even know about courses within their own department!) Is it little wonder, then, that most students view GE courses as relatively unimportant and essentially hurdles that must be jumped on the way to the important stuff, i.e., the major? How many times have we heard students talk about "...getting their GE's out of the way," or complaining that this or that course "...is too demanding for a GE course?" Students don't take their GE courses any more seriously than we do.

While somewhat of an oversimplification, Denison's GE program consists primarily of a broad, flexible set of distribution requirements aimed at guaranteeing some breadth in our students' liberal education. As a result, when we engage in discussions about our GE program, the focus has tended to be on what and how many courses our students should take to satisfy the GE requirement—3 natural science courses or 2, a foreign language requirement or not; if so, 1 or 2 years, etc.? This tendency to think in terms of distribution is further reinforced by the understandable concerns departments have about their own turf and departmental size. Moving from three to two science courses or eliminating the language requirement could indeed affect the size of certain departments. Moreover, once a particular GE requirement is in place, it's very hard to eliminate it without feeling that we are somehow betraying our commitment to liberal education. We saw this when the faculty voted recently not to eliminate the oral proficiency requirement, even though I know that a majority of the faculty do not believe the requirement is necessary or accomplishes its purpose.

Rather than recommending that we once again review our GE program, I am proposing that we consider an entirely different way of thinking about and structuring general education at Denison. I refer to my model as an "integrated" program because it attempts to connect general education to the academic major. The integration of breadth and depth, if you will. I believe this approach will move us a long way toward elevating the importance of our GE requirements in the minds of our students, increase interdisciplinary collaboration among the faculty, and enhance the quality of both general education and the academic major.

The Basic Model

The essential feature of my proposal is to integrate general education into the academic major by asking each department, within certain guidelines, to designate about 6-8 courses as GE "cognates" that are part of the requirements for the major. For example, the History Department may require two years of a foreign language, comparative courses in economics and political science, and an art history course; Psychology might require a year of biology or chemistry, course work in sociology/anthropology, and perhaps have a diversity requirement. Instead of our current system which offers an extensive menu of courses that may be taken to fulfill a particular requirement, each department would select courses in other areas that make the most sense within the context of their own discipline.

I further propose that we maintain a minimal set of "core" courses which would include FY101, FY102, and perhaps one course from each division of the college. Thus the overall structure would look something like this (assuming a 32-course, 128 credit hour requirement for graduation):

	# courses
Core Courses	6
Major	9
Cognates	6-8
Electives	9-11
Total	32

Note that the total number of general education courses (Core + Cognates) is about the same as it is now, but the kind of GE courses required would vary from major to major. The major advantages of this model, as I see it, are (1) a much stronger integration of general education and the major, (2) greater faculty ownership of our GE requirements, (3) enhanced interdepartmental understanding and collaboration, and (4) the elevation of the importance of our GE requirements in the minds of students.

I submit this model not as a proposal that the Academic Affairs Council and Faculty necessarily need to act upon during the current year but rather as a catalyst for promoting further discussions of our general education program. Based upon conversations I had with a number of faculty, there appears to be some reasonably widespread interest in undertaking a thorough review of our GE Program.

Proposal
Departmental Status for Women's Studies
November, 1994

Background

Women's studies is the interdisciplinary study of the ideas, experiences, and contributions of diverse groups of women. Through instruction, research, and service, women's studies faculty examine women's cultural identities, social roles, collective and individual history, and literary and artistic expressions. Women's studies scholarship engenders new knowledge about women's lives and relationships to human cultures and societies, and develops new theoretical perspectives and methodologies on sex and gender appropriate to that pursuit. The growth of the field can be measured by the increasing numbers of undergraduate and graduate programs, journals, book series published by university presses, conferences devoted to interdisciplinary women's studies research and scholarship, and grant-funded women's studies curricular and research projects.

At Ohio State University, Women's Studies was officially recognized as an academic program in 1975, when the Office of Women's Studies was established to develop new courses in the interdisciplinary field of women's studies and to coordinate the courses about women that were already being offered in various academic departments. The first faculty member was hired jointly with the Department of History in 1976, and the first course, Introduction to Women's Studies in the Humanities, became part of the University's general education curriculum (GEC) in 1978. The Office of Women's Studies became a Center, with the authority to offer a major, in 1980 and was placed administratively in the College of Humanities. In 1990, the Master of Arts in Women's Studies program was approved.

Since 1980, 255 students have graduated with the major or minor in women's studies. During that same period, overall enrollments in Women's Studies classes have increased more than ten-fold. Since 1982, more than 28,000 OSU students have taken Women's Studies courses. Since 1991, 50 students have completed the Women's Studies MA or the MLS degree with an emphasis in women's studies. Approximately 50 percent of the MAs have gone on to pursue PhDs--in literature, history, psychology, sociology, education, communication, social work--or professional degrees in law or medicine. Others are working in such diverse areas as career development, vocational education, violence prevention, cultural arts programming, student personnel, state and federal government, journalism, university publishing, poverty programs for women, public interest law, and public health.

An Administrative Change

The faculty and Advisory Council (composed of faculty, student, and lecturer representatives) of the Center for Women's Studies request a change in the administrative status of our unit from center to department, effective July 1, 1995. This request can be classified as an administrative change because, in most respects, the Center has been functioning as a Department since 1980. The requested change will recognize the Center's accomplishments and institutionalize practices already in place.

Justifications for the change in status include the Center's existing degree programs and

participation in the university's GEC curriculum. We have offered the BA since 1980 (approved by the Board of Trustees) and the MA since 1990 (approved by The Ohio Board of Regents). The approval of those degree programs, along with the documentable evidence of the growth in women's studies as a field over the last twenty years, attests to the identification of women's studies as a legitimate area of academic concern, with a realized potential for developing both national and international recognition.

The faculty's record of scholarship, as well as community and professional service at OSU is evidence of the field's research and service opportunities (see attached vitae). In the past two years, nine joint-appointment faculty produced 44 articles in refereed journals and anthologies as well as four books, one of which was the 1991 winner of the Helen Hooven Santmyer Prize in Women's Studies of the OSU Press. During the same period, one faculty member received a \$45,000 NSF grant, another a \$98,00 grant from the National Center for Nursing Research, another a \$22,500 grant from the Ohio Department of Administrative Services, and another a \$20,00 grant from the American Learned Council. (Women's Studies faculty are also routinely successful in attracting College and University funds to support their research.) In addition Women's Studies faculty gave approximately 62 presentations at other universities and at professional meetings, including the American Sociological Association, the African Studies Association, the International Conference on Women and Development, the National Women's Studies Association, the American Studies Association, the Modern Language Association, and the American Historical Association. Three faculty members also won teaching awards, including the 1993 Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award, and all faculty members made significant contributions to the local and state communities.

Student demand attests to the existence of a constituency for women's studies as both a specialization and a component of a general liberal arts and sciences education. Eight Women's Studies courses (201, 210, 367.01, 367.04, 317, 370, 510, 520) are included in the GEC: five are included in the core; two meet the sophomore level writing requirement; and seven meet the social diversity requirement. Demand for those courses as well as for other core Women's Studies courses (taught by Center faculty) and for courses cross-listed or cross-referenced with Women's Studies (taught outside the Center), exceeds our capacity to serve students. (In 1993-94 alone, we had almost 1500 requests for spaces in Women's Studies courses that we could not accommodate.) As of the 1993-94 academic year, approximately 100 students are majoring and 121 are minoring in women's studies,¹ and 32 graduate students are pursuing the MA. (The current admission rate for the MA program is 29 percent; applications have doubled since the program's inception.) In addition, five students are pursuing one-of-a-kind PhDs in women's studies. Such demand argues for the expansion of Women's Studies at Ohio State simply to meet

¹This number of women's studies majors is as reliable a figure as it is currently possible to get. The figure includes statistics from Arts and Sciences as well as students who have officially signed up as majors in the Women's Studies office (a list that is regularly purged of inactive students). Official figures typically exclude students with double majors; they are counted in their second major only during the first quarter after their declaration of a double major. The loss of these students is the result of data forms used by Admissions. We are working with Bob Arkin to improve the counting of double majors.

current demand.

Organizational criteria for the change in status include the Center's budget, faculty size, student constituency, well-functioning office staff, and adequate equipment inventory. With an Annual Rate of \$763,443 in 1994-95, the Center's budget exceeds the minimum stated requirement of \$250,000 for departments. The Center currently has eleven faculty on joint appointments (including a member of the Newark campus faculty), one instructor, and one visiting professor, thereby exceeding the ten faculty minimum for departments. (Once departmental status is achieved, this number is likely to grow through the affiliation of faculty in other units with Women's Studies.) The core faculty also spans the ranks; it includes three full professors, five associate professors, one assistant professor, and three instructors.² In addition to faculty with official joint appointments, 42 Associated Graduate Faculty members offer graduate courses in the Women's Studies curriculum and serve on Women's Studies graduate students' thesis and exam committees. Courses offered by associated faculty, in addition to core and additional cross-listed courses, expand the curriculum of the Center to approximately 75 courses per year, offered in fourteen departments and six colleges across the campus.

In 1993-94, the Center served 3736 students in GEC courses and 36 Center core and cross-listed courses. An additional 1200 students took 30 courses cross-referenced with Women's Studies. In 1993-94, Women's Studies produced 18,444 quarter hours in core courses alone (not including cross-referenced courses), thereby exceeding the minimum of 1000 credit hours per quarter needed to qualify for departmental status. That number would increase if the faculty were large enough to meet student demand. (The deficiency in faculty size is also revealed by statistics on expenditures per credit hour which, at \$39.02 (compared with the College average of \$66.56), is the lowest in the College of Humanities.

The Center's qualifications for departmental status also include several external measures. Women's Studies at Ohio State has long been recognized as one of the premiere programs in the US. At more than 17,000 volumes, OSU's Women's Studies Library is the largest in the country. In addition, the location at OSU of one of only a dozen master's programs in women's studies in the US attracts highly qualified graduate students to the university. In the last two years, students have enrolled in the MA program from institutions such as Smith, Harvard, the University of Minnesota, Skidmore, William and Mary, the University of California at San Diego, Washington University, and Bryn Mawr, as well as from universities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. The rate of matriculation in the MA program exceed 80 percent. The Director and Center faculty are frequently asked to consult in the formation and evaluation of other women's studies programs across the country. For example, during the last two years, Susan Hartmann was an outside evaluator for the well-established program at the University of Maryland, and Sally Kitch was an evaluator for a proposed MA degree programs at Rutgers and Georgia State. The Center for Women's Studies at OSU was chosen as the site for the *National Women's Studies Association Journal* when it was founded in 1987. The *Journal* was housed here until 1991. The Ohio State program was the only US program featured in *Women's Studies International: Nairobi and Beyond* published by the Feminist Press in 1991; the program was also given an

²One of these instructors will become an assistant professor in January.

award for service to NWSA in 1989. The Center has also qualified for membership in the prestigious National Council for Research on Women. Susan Hartmann still serves on the NCRW Board. As a research center, we administer a small grants program, the Elizabeth D. Gee Fund for Research on Women, that awards approximately \$10,000 per year for OSU faculty and PhD student research on women. Faculty and graduate students from across the campus have benefitted from those grants. As part of the Critical Difference for Women program, the Gee Fund received a \$150,000 gift from the Coca Cola Foundation in 1994. The new money will fund four larger grants each year in the areas of gender representation and the material conditions of women's lives.

Overcoming Obstacles

In addition to the logic of reclassifying the Center in order to reflect its function, this request for a change in status targets an on-going problem inherent in the current classification as a center. Despite the benefits to the College and to individuals of joint appointments, and despite a history of cooperation from departments and faculty who bear the burdens of dual affiliation, complete reliance on the joint appointment has become an obstacle to the optimal development of women's studies at OSU. The requirement to share faculty with other units creates dependency on those units--rather than on Women's Studies--curricular priorities. Our inability to control the hiring and tenuring of faculty translates into an inability to develop the women's studies curriculum in areas deemed important by those who are central to and expert in the field, unless other units can be persuaded to accept Women's Studies priorities. The failure to achieve such persuasion has sometimes been the case, to the detriment of the Center's curricular and scholarly growth.

The Center's mandated dependence on other units for hiring and tenuring faculty also prevents the program at OSU from developing as fully as it should in an interdisciplinary direction. Such development has become increasingly necessary as the field has matured. Indeed, it is the interdisciplinarity of women's studies that has contributed to the field's evolution into a discrete discipline. The best of the recent PhDs whom we would like to attract to our program are as likely to identify themselves with women's studies as with a traditional discipline and to seek employment characterized by their women's studies focus. Such scholars have an interest in the reorganization of existing knowledge and in the generation of new knowledge about women throughout history, across the world, and in different economic, ethnic, and racial groups, as well as about gender and the impact of gender constructions on people, societies, institutions, and systems of ideas. They have developed expertise in particular mixes of existing research methods (such as logic, statistics, textual and visual analysis, and observation) and new approaches and methods (such as placing women at the center of inquiry; contextualizing knowledge; recognizing the political and subjective nature of all research; and criticizing the basic assumptions underlying women's exclusion and devaluation and asserting new, more inclusive models of knowledge). Such a scholarly interests are not necessarily compatible with a joint appointment in a traditional discipline.

In order to achieve the highest levels of scholarship and the most advanced curriculum in the field, Women's Studies faculty at OSU must have the freedom to hire and tenure at least some faculty in a unit devoted exclusively to that field's scholarship and pedagogy. The addition of a

graduate degree program, which necessarily focuses on the uniqueness of women's studies, has only underscored the urgency of this need.

An example of the difficulties faced by the Center in developing the curriculum has been our inability to hire specialists in the social, political, and economic condition of women. Various units rejected the joint appointment because it did not suit their curricular and hiring priorities. This failure, which represents several years of effort, means that we are currently unable to staff with the best scholar/teachers available urgently needed courses on the material conditions of women's lives. Such courses are essential in a contemporary women's studies program. We have concluded that the best solution to this problem is a full-time Women's Studies faculty person with expertise in gender and politics, work, and economics.

Goals

The primary goal of this request for a change in status from center to department is to develop a structure that most effectively promotes women's studies scholarship and teaching and allows for the further maturation of women's studies at OSU. Departmental status will allow us to attract the best scholars and to develop the kind of curriculum necessary for an excellent program that anticipates the challenges of the next century. Achievement of departmental structure will place OSU in the company of other distinguished public institutions, such as the University of Minnesota (with 5 women's studies FTE), the University of California at Berkeley (with 2 women's studies FTE) and, shortly, the University of Maryland (with 7 women's studies FTE), all of which have recognized the need for departmental status and full-time faculty for women's studies. The achievement of departmental status will also acknowledge and reward past activity in and commitment to Women's Studies by OSU faculty. The human and fiscal resources already devoted to women's studies on this campus attest to both the need for and the success of the current program. The success of the MA degree program, which admitted its fifth class in 1994, is perhaps the best evidence of the existing quality of women's studies at OSU. Among the markers of that success are the post-graduation activities of the MAs, which include acceptances in PhD programs at the University of Southern California, Cornell University, the University of Illinois, Yale, University of Wisconsin, NYU, University of Texas, and the University of Miami, to name a few.

In addition, departmental status for Women's Studies will make the university's commitment to women and to issues related to gender and gender equity more visible. It will also be a sign of the institution's willingness to focus on and serve the educational needs of women students and to educate both men and women about the impact of gender on the generation of knowledge, the structures of societies, and the construction of personality and experience. Because of its interdisciplinary nature, a Department of Women's Studies will further represent the university's commitment to the pursuit of knowledge that both transcends and challenges traditionally defined academic fields.

New Structure

While the departmental structure we seek will share with more traditional departments all budgetary and personnel rights and responsibilities, it will deviate from many departments in the

composition of its faculty--a combination of joint-appointment and full-time Women's Studies faculty. This atypical structure reflects our desire to maximize existing resources as well as to create a flexible organization that facilitates the generation of new knowledge from within existing disciplines as well as from the experience of interdisciplinary women's studies scholarship and pedagogy.

Although most present joint-appointment faculty will continue at .50 FTE (offering five courses in two years) , additional faculty might join the department at .20 FTE (offering one course per year) or request a no-salary affiliation. The goal for the new Department is three to five full-time faculty by the year 2000, at least one of which will result from the shift of existing personnel to a full-time position. Associated Graduate Faculty members will continue to teach courses that are a part of the women's studies curriculum and to serve on thesis and examination committees for Women's Studies graduate students. Primary governance of the new Department will rest with the faculty, but the Women's Studies Advisory Council, composed of faculty as well as student and lecturer representatives, will continue to advise the faculty and the chair. The committee structure described in the revised Pattern of Administration (1993) will remain intact.